

How Government Ownership Might Be Effected.

EDITOR ADVOCATE:—In your issue of the 23d inst., you quote the following from the Emporia Gazette: "Their conventions resolve, their orators favor and their papers demand governmental ownership. But not a platform, not a speaker or paper of note ever offers a plan for the government to secure the ownership." For that editor's consideration you suggest the plan of the government's commencing by the foreclosure of its mortgage on the Union Pacific railroad.

The statement of the Gazette is quite remarkable in this: First—That it should suppose that party platforms were ever made to contain anything but the general declaration of principles upon which the party would administer the political power of the government. He ought to know, and probably does know, that such platforms never assert the details of any plan by which these principles shall be enforced. Second—It is unfortunate that an editor of so prominent a paper should be so lacking in general information as to have never heard or read of some, at least, of the many discussions that have been held and of the plans suggested by the friends of this great movement, as to the best mode by which the government could properly secure the ownership of all public transportation.

But I only refer to this matter to call the attention of the editor of the Gazette, as well as other thoughtful people, to a plan for obtaining ownership of the railroads by the government, suggested in a public speech made by me in Black Hawk county, Iowa, as early as 1872 or 1873. I will here repeat the substance of that speech relating to how the government may and should procure such ownership. I said:

"That railroads armed with such vast wealth and directed by the brainiest men in the nation, possessed the power to command legislatures, congresses and courts and that so long as they were allowed to remain individual enterprises it would be an impossibility for the state or general government to control them to any reasonable degree to the benefit of the public. That the only remedy for the people was government ownership, and that this could and should be accomplished in a way not to violate any man's constitutional rights. That this railroad transportation was an absolute necessity to the settlement and development of this vast inland country, and therefore, was pre-eminently of public concern, as much so as the mail carriage and the creation and issuance of money; and that the government never should have allowed it to pass into individual control, no more than it should permit one individual or any set of men to issue the money of the country or carry the mails and lay such tribute upon the people as they pleased. The transportation system had become an unbearable oppression and it was the duty of the government to gain possession and protect the people. Not by confiscation, nor by the principles of 'eminent domain,' as some advocated, but by fair and honorable purchase or by actual construction of new lines.

"As a simple illustration of the manner in which I would gain ownership and control were I Uncle Sam, I would determine at once to own a railroad from New York city to San Francisco, and operate the same in the interests of the people. I would look over the routes already completed and select the one I would like to operate. At once I would go to the headquarters of the road selected, and say:

"Gentlemen, I am Uncle Sam, I have

concluded to own and operate for my people a railroad from New York city to the Pacific coast, and I would like to buy your road. What will you take for it?"

"Three hundred millions," they reply.

"Why, gentlemen, don't you charge too much? How much did your road really cost?"

"Oh, only about 150 million dollars."

"And you want me to pay you twice what it costs to construct one! You know that my people will furnish me all the money needed to do anything for their good, and it wouldn't be fair for me to take from them 300 million dollars, when half of that sum is all that is needed to construct just as good a road as yours."

"True," they reply, "our road only cost 150 million dollars, but it is a fine investment, we have a cinch upon the business of the route; we have received large gifts from the general government, from states, counties, cities, and the people, and besides this we have the power to levy such rates and charges upon the public as bring us in most generous returns on a valuation of full 300 million dollars, and we cannot consent to part with this property for a less sum."

"Very well, gentlemen, I thought it only right that I should offer you a fair price for this property before taking any further steps. You have said that its cost was only 150 million dollars, and I now offer to pay you this sum on the property. You can well see it would not be right for me to call on my people for 300 million dollars when half that sum will construct a new road, and you must know that I have a right to build a road as well as anybody. The money I will pay you shall be coined in my mints, and shall be new money and lawful in all parts of my realm to pay all debts public and private."

"We concede your right to build a road where you please and we take no exception to your money; it is all fair on your part, and it is all fair on our part to decline to sell at this time."

"No offense. Good day, gentlemen."

"On my return to Washington I should at once order the best engineer in my service to organize a surveying party and run out the most direct economical and practicable route from ocean to ocean. I should direct him to send me at the end of each month a pay roll of the monthly pay and expense of the squad. On receiving this roll I should go to the treasurer's office and have struck off sufficient new greenbacks to pay every man his monthly dues, and send it to them. This new money should be lawful money to pay all debts public or private in all parts of the union. And so when the squad returned and the report of the engineer was made and the line established, every expense of this survey would have been paid."

"Then I should call upon some of my best men to organize an army of the unemployed of my people, not to destroy life, but to construct a great public highway across the continent. Monthly pay rolls should be returned and at the end of each month new greenbacks should be issued in like kind as before, and sent to this army of men, and every expense of every kind should be settled at the end of each month, so that when the road should be completed and equipped it would be absolutely free from debt, and the burden upon the people thereafter for transportation upon this road would be a charge only sufficient to pay the expenses of maintaining the road. In addition to this, there would be added to our money 150 million dollars, sent, not to bankers to filter out to the people at usurious rates, but sent directly to

the toiling thousands, and by them put into active circulation without usury, blessing every legitimate industry in the land."

"The postal system of charges should be substantially adopted as to carriage on this public highway. A bushel of wheat or other products should be taken from Kansas to the seaboard at the same charge as from Chicago or any other intervening point, so that when the wheat or other product is sold in New York the Kansas farmer will realize just as much per bushel for his wheat as will the farmer in any other state shipping over the same road."

"Comprehend, if you can, the justice and the benefit this would bring to the West. Every producer and laborer upon the line would be placed upon absolute equality as to the price of all products of similar kind and quality. The Eastern farms and manufactories would not be depreciated in value, but those of the West would be appreciated in value to those of the East, soil and climatic conditions being the same. A continental railroad, built by the government on such a plan, carrying the people from one side of the continent to the other for \$5 a head, and their products to the markets for a like nominal charge, how long, think you, it would be before every railroad in America would be pressing Uncle Sam to purchase their franchises at actual cost, if not less?"

The foregoing is not all of that speech by any means, but I have given enough of it to show that the Populists are not all thoughtless as to the details by which they would carry out their platform principles, were they in power, and that here is a plan among the many that have been suggested by which the government could easily secure the ownership of the railroads, if the people only so willed. And you know Billy McKinley says that the people can have just what they want.

W. H. CURTIS.

Kimball, S. D.

Sixth District Populists.

EDITOR ADVOCATE:—Talk about picnics, talk about crowds, talk about vim, talk about enthusiasm, talk about workers, talk about the "get there" fellows. Smith county Populists take the cake, and "don't you forget it." Excuse the slang, Mr. Editor, but I don't know how else to express it. I thought the Kingman county boys, and the Pawnee county fellows, and the Washington county chaps, and a whole lot of other counties were great rustlers, and they are, but I tell you, man, they are not in it a little bit as compared to the Smith county hustlers. Why, last Wednesday, August 1, R. S. Osborn and Anna L. Diggs were billed to speak at Smith Centre, and you should have just seen that crowd—fully 4,000 people. Many others put it larger, but when you come to think of the county away out here northwest, where there is so much hot and dry weather, turning out that many people to a meeting at which no state candidate would be present, what do you think the crowds will be when the poor man's friend and brother, Governor Lawelling, will speak at Lebanon in that county later in the campaign?

Before dinner, the State House quartette, consisting of Messrs. Henderson, Macky, Neher and Baker, rendered some most excellent music, after which Mr. Butler, of Abilene, and "another fellow," gave short talks. When all had partaken of the mysterious contents of those baskets which had been prepared by the lily-white hands of the dear people who are to vote after this fall, the band played and the crowd gathered around the stand to hear one of those

master speeches of R. S. Osborn, and it was a convincing one, too. Then little Annie Diggs, God bless her, mounted the platform, and notwithstanding she had just completed a series of five meetings in Phillips county, where she had had from 1,000 to 1,200 people at each meeting, except Phillipsburg, where there were only about 500 present, she seemed to be only in good trim for this vast crowd. And how she did hold them! Well, it was wonderful, to say the least, and then at night, too, the opera house was filled to hear her. And thus ended the first meeting in Congressman Baker's district. By the way, put it down in your little book that Baker will have a larger majority than any congressman from Kansas.

From here we started for Norton, where Secretary Osborn was to speak on Thursday. At Phillipsburg O. L. Smith, of the state executive committee, joined us. The meeting at Norton was a fair meeting, but not what it should have been. The court house was full, and the captain did himself proud. Much credit is due the chairman and secretary of the county central committee and a few other members. We believe by the time the next meeting is held in Norton county, it will be as well organized as any in the state.

On Friday we held a meeting at Colby. Now there are about 700 voters in Thomas county all told, and nearly one-half of them were at this meeting, besides many of the most intelligent women of the county. Mr. Osborn made the best speech he has made so far. O. L. Smith gave an enthusiastic talk, while "The Advocate" man told a story or two, and thus ends our fourth meeting. The boys in Thomas county are wide awake, and claim if each county in the state will give as large a Populist majority according to their voting population they will be satisfied with the result.

The people up here will read the Advocate, for at Smith Center we will have 247 new readers, at Norton 121 and at Colby seventy-five. You bet we are a-growing, and don't you never doubt it. Our good Alliance brethren up this way are not much alarmed at the Third district Breckenridge's flop, even though he was at one time a "way-up" man in the Alliance.

Our next four meetings will be at Goodland, St. Francis, Atwood and Oberlin. We expect large meetings at these points.

O. W. HENDREE.

Shawnee County Populist Ticket.

Clerk of the District Court.....J. O. Butler
Probate Judge.....C. H. Custer
County Attorney.....E. E. Cheesey
Superintendent Public Instruction.....
.....Miss Nettie Wright
Representative Thirty-fifth District.....
.....J. J. Sohenk
Representative Thirty-sixth District.....
.....R. J. Sloat
Representative Thirty-seventh District.....
.....F. A. Kiene
County Commissioner.....F. S. Stevens

Campaign Glee Club.

The Famous Glee Club, headed by the favorite campaign singer and composer, Charles McNairy, is open to engagements for Populist meetings. The other members are J. W. Speece, W. H. Jones and C. C. Smith. Address, Charles McNairy, Topeka, Kas.

The WESTERN TRAIL is published quarterly by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific railway. It tells how to get a farm in the west, and it will be sent to you gratis for one year. Send name and address to "Editor Western Trail, Chicago," and receive it one year free. JOHN SEBASTIAN, G. P. A.

SPECIAL CLUB RATE OFFER. We send both the Kansas Farmer and THE ADVOCATE to January 1, 1902, for only 50 cents. Fifty thousand new subscribers wanted, hence we make liberal reductions to club rates.